Applications to Law Schools May Set Record

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have sparked some interest, law-school officials note. Among them: the Iran-contra hearings in Congress and the battle over the nomination of Robert Bork to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Law schools also may have been indirectly affected by the negative publicity that big business has received as a result of insider-trading scandals and the 1987 stock-market crash. Some law-school officials believe those events may have scared off some potential business-school students, prompting them to consider law school instead.

Strong Economy Cited

One person who doesn't buy that theory is Stephen Schreiber, program director for the Graduate Management Admissions Test. In the 1987-88 academic year, he says, a record 269,000 students registered to take the test, which is required by most major universities for entrance into an M.B.A. program. But the increase, 3 per cent, was considerably smaller than that in each of the past several years.

Another possible explanation for the surge in law-school applications, according to Mr. Kennish of the Law School Admission Council, is the relatively strong economy. In a recent study, he found that the number of students taking the Law School Admission Test jumped when inflation slowed.

Joyce Curll, assistant dean for admissions at Harvard Law School, says her office has been swamped by applications this year. Although it is too early to draw any conclusions, she says, the increase in applications could be as high as 30 per cent over last year. She does not believe any single event is responsible, but applicants did mention a few.

"People mentioned the Bork hearings and the contra hearings," she says. "Only one person mentioned 'L.A. Law.' I assume they were too embarrassed to."

At law schools around the country, administrators report no shortage of idealistic students who believe—at the outset, at least—that they will use their degrees to help disadvantaged members of society. But by the time they graduate, most have succumbed either to financial pressures or to the lure of the prestigious firms that aggressively recruit on their campuses, administrators say.

"These firms come to campus and put on lavish displays at the Sheraton with shrimp cocktail and oysters Rockefeller," says Ms. Hadden. "They have an opportunity to impress. Most public-interest firms don't have the money to compete."

Ron Fox, who coordinates public-interest job placement for Harvard Law School, calls the imbalance "a massive problem." He says 35 per cent to 40 per cent of the law school's entering students plan a public-interest career. However, 5 per cent at most end up in either government or public-interest work right after graduation.

Law schools need to do more, Mr. Fox says, to educate students about career choices and to ease the financial burden of those who decide to accept low-paying, public-interest jobs.

Sue Schechter, a lawyer with the National Association of Public Interest Law, agrees. She says law schools should devote more energy and resources to educating students about public-interest careers.

"We need to do something to make public-interest work not only possible, but respectable," she says. "From day one of law school, students should be told they have a commitment to public service."

Public-Service Responsibilities

Even if students do not plan to take a public-interest job, they should be sensitive enough to their public-service responsibilities to perform *pro bono* work when they get out of law school, says Stefan H. Krieger, associate director of the Southern Methodist University Civil Clinic. Students at the clinic work under faculty supervision, representing local clients on such issues as civil rights, immigration, and consumer protection.

"I don't think a law professor standing in front of a classroom lecturing about poor people is going to convince them," says Mr. Krieger, who is an assistant professor of law at S.M.U. "They should be exposing them in real-practice, in clinics. We should be sensitizing them to their obligations as lawyers, even in big firms, to perform public-interest work."

While relatively few law-school graduates go into public-interest jobs immediately upon graduation, many switch into lower paying jobs at some point in their careers, law-school officials say.

A 55-Pct. Pay Cut

Joseph M. Sellers is a case in point. A graduate of Case Western Reserve University School of Law, he worked for several years for a large, private firm before taking a 55-per-cent cut in pay to accept a job with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. While his job at a large firm allowed him to repay some of his loans and to buy furniture, it also gave him the supervision and guidance he says he might not have found otherwise.

"After a while, I realized that working for a firm whose principal motive was maximizing profits was not what I was most comfortable with," he says.

His current job is personally satisfying, but required some serious financial sacrifices. "Ten years out of law school," he says, "I'm still earning less than the starting salaries of lawyers in most large firms."

Little Change Seen in Requirements

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crease in requirements was for mathematics in four-year colleges.

N.E.H. Chairman Lynne V. Cheney expressed some disappointment over the survey's findings.

"We should take satisfaction in some progress," she said, "but one would have hoped that all the concern about curriculum reform would have resulted in more."

However, Ms. Cheney acknowledged in an interview that "curriculum reform is enormously difficult."

Although she seeks stronger humanities requirements, Ms. Cheney said, "I don't bemoan the increase in other disciplines. I always worry about students not being exposed to social sciences and math."

On average, students who entered four-year colleges this year seeking a baccalaureate degree must take a minimum of 52 semester credit hours in general education, the report says. Those credits represent 41 per cent of the total needed for graduation, up from the 38-per-cent minimum required of students in 1983-84.

The report says four-year institutions are changing the structure of their general-education requirements. In 1988-89, for example, about 86 per cent of the colleges limited the range of courses students could take to meet the requirements, up from 77 per cent five years ago.

504 Institutions Responded

"If this trend continues," said Ms. Cheney, "we may see a time when students are sufficiently directed by general-education requirements that it will be very difficult to get a baccalaureate degree without studying English, history, philosophy, and foreign languages."

The N.E.H. commissioned the survey last spring to provide national data on changes in the last five years in general-education course and credit requirements, particularly in the humanities. The survey, based on a questionnaire completed by 504 institutions, was conducted by the Higher Education Surveys System.

Copies of the report, "Undergraduate General Education and Humanities Requirements," are available free from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Office of Planning and Budget, Room 403, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington 20506.

Some Programs Make Low-Paying Legal Jobs Attractive

PITTSBURGH

When Kerri Cappella first learned about a local program for female offenders, it seemed like an intriguing place to spend her first summer after law school.

The program was eager for an intern. The problem was, it couldn't afford to pay a salary, and Ms. Cappella couldn't afford to work free.

Fortunately for both of them, the University of Pittsburgh School of Law is one of a growing number of law schools where students, faculty members, and alumni have chipped in money to make such jobs feasible.

The Pittsburgh law school's Legal Income Sharing Foundation gave Ms. Cappella a $2,500 grant to spend 10 weeks visiting female inmates, researching their cases, and answering their legal questions.

"If I hadn't gotten the grant, there is no way I would have been able to work there," says Ms. Cappella.

The money that allowed her and eight of her classmates to work in low- or non-paying public-interest jobs last summer came from law-school students, faculty members, and alumni who wanted to help provide better legal representation for the poor and other disadvantaged groups.

The income-sharing foundation is affiliated with the student-run National Association for Public Interest Law (NAPIL), which currently has member groups on 43 campuses. Members of NAPIL groups are typically asked to contribute 1 per cent of their summer earnings or a day's pay to help finance grants for students interested in public-interest jobs.

Last year, the groups raised about $600,000, which supported some 300 jobs with legal-services offices, civil-rights groups, and other non-profit legal organizations.

"The people these groups generally represent would not get legal help if it were not for these kinds of projects," says Sue Schechter, staff lawyer for the association, which was founded in 1986. "For the legal profession, it's embarrassing to see the number of people who are going unrepresented."

Yale Program Began in 1974

Student-financed fellowships have been around for years at some institutions, such as Yale Law School, which started its program in 1974. The past few years, however, have seen a surge in interest, in part because of the growing frustration of students who feel they cannot afford to take public-interest jobs, organizers say.

"Without the summer grants, hundreds of students would not be able to take jobs in the areas that interest them," says Michael Caudell-Feagan, NAPIL's executive director.

The NAPIL headquarters recently sent letters to 400 of the country's largest law firms asking them to contribute $1,000 for every five summer associates they hire, up to a maximum annual contribution of $10,000. By January, five law firms had signed on, and about 15 more had indicated interest, Mr. Caudell-Feagan says.

Myra A. Nakelsky, a student at the University of California's Hastings College of Law and president of NAPIL, says law-school administrators are "starting to sit up and take notice" of students' efforts to make public-interest work affordable.

SARAH HUBAN

Michael Caudell-Feagan: "Without summer grants, hundreds of students would not be able to take jobs in areas that interest them."

Among the measures that are being instituted or expanded at some law schools are loan-forgiveness or deferral programs for students who accept low-paying public-interest jobs.

At Harvard Law School, for instance, administrators decide how much students can afford to pay on their law-school loans, based on their salary, and the school pays the rest. Some other law schools, rather than forgiving part of the loan, make it possible for the student to pay it back over a longer period of time.

Some schools are financing their own summer-grant programs for students wishing to pursue a public-interest career. Last summer, 80 New York University law students received grants that paid them $275 a week to work with such groups and programs as an American Indian–rights project in Boulder, Colo., a civil-rights group in Israel, a Sierra Club chapter in Alaska, and a project for the homeless in rural Tennessee.

"The demand for these projects is so tremendous that we have a long waiting list," says Jane Thieberger, placement director at N.Y.U.'s law school. "With this kind of assistance, students are able to follow their dreams."

—KATHERINE S. MANGAN

Mathematics Education Is Inadequate, a Report Charges

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taught well, because their professors "tend to focus their teaching on those who might become mathematicians."

According to the report, mathematics professors tend to stick to the curriculum they learned, rather than introducing the latest advances in the discipline, or even teaching the subjects of their research. For instance, most mathematics curricula, from kindergarten to graduate school, ignore modern mathematics.

"The arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and calculus taught nowadays are mere shadow images of modern mathematics," the report said.

In addition to its role in physical science and engineering, "mathematics today is a diverse discipline that deals with data, measurements, and observations from science; with inference, deduction, and proof; and with mathematical models of natural phenomena, of human behavior, and of social systems," the report said.

The report recommended that all students be taught mathematics to "the level of literacy formerly associated with the few who entered college," and that all college students be taught "the degree of facility with mathematics formerly required only of those preparing for scientific careers."

Calculators and Computers

To accomplish these goals, it said, colleges and universities must establish a "national plan for mathematics" that builds on proposed national standards for elementary- and secondary-school mathematics education.

The report endorsed the use of calculators and computers at all levels of mathematics. It cited studies that show that the use of such tools does not prevent students from learning basic skills like division, but does make other areas of mathematics more accessible.

In addition, the report said, faculty members should concentrate on making introductory mathematics courses "attractive and effective," should lecture less and try other teaching methods, and should make sure that students learn mathematics as it is currently practiced.

Little additional financing will be needed to restructure curricula and retrain teachers, panel members said. "We need to do better with what we are presently spending," said Ronald G. Douglas, dean of the college of physical sciences and mathematics of the State University of New York at Stony Brook and a member of two of the three committees that prepared the report.

"Universities spend half their time teaching what students saw in high-school mathematics classes but did not learn," he added. "If we change what is going on in high school, it will free us to pay more attention to training and retraining teachers."

Copies of the report are available for $7.95 each from National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington 20418; (202) 334-3313.